

PRESS RELEASE

NORMAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

Bicycles and the Law

Recently, the department received an allegation of a rather serious bicycle-related infraction. In summary, the violation involved a pair of bicyclist receiving an escort from a trailing automobile, whose driver waived cars traveling in the same direction around the bike riders. Although the persons involved probably had the best of intentions, their actions are a violation of Norman's ordinances that govern the operation of bicycles and automobiles on city streets and highways. Obviously, the escort automobile represented an unreasonable interference with traffic flow, seriously inconvenienced other persons using the roadway, and represented a potential safety concern.

Collision-related data over the last five years indicates that bicyclist are involved in only slightly more than one percent of all traffic accidents in Norman, but when they are, the bike rider sustains injuries about ninety-four percent of the time. In examining causation of these collisions, automobile divers accounted for about sixty percent, while bicyclist contributed to the wreck about forty percent of the time. Bicycle-involved collisions averaged 36.25 per year from 2007 through 2010, but fell to only 24 in 2011.

Now, with the arrival of warmer weather and daylight savings time, more bicyclist will begin riding, which presents an opportunity for the police department to remind motorist and bicyclist alike of a few of the basic laws. Obviously, our goal is to encourage everyone to contribute to the community's safety.

If you are overtaking a bicyclist while operating an automobile, ordinance requires the driver to "exercise due care by leaving a safe distance between the motor vehicle and the bicycle of not less than three (3) feet until the motor vehicle is safely past the overtaken bicycle."

Ordinances require bicyclist under the age of eighteen to wear safety helmets approved by Snell or ANSI. The police department suggests it is a prudent practice for all bike riders to wear a safety helmet, no matter their age. When riding on a road designed for two-way traffic, ordinance requires the bicyclist to "ride as close as practicable to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway." The major exception to this rule is if the roadway is a one-way street with two or more lanes; then the rider "may ride as near the left-hand curb or edge of such roadway as practicable." With the a few exceptions "persons riding bicycles upon a roadway shall not ride more than two (2) abreast except on paths or parts of roadways set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles. Persons riding two (2) abreast shall not impede the normal and reasonable use of traffic and, on a laned roadway, shall ride within a single lane."

The Norman Police Department wants everyone to enjoy our beautiful seasonal weather, but please do so safely. For more information on laws relating to bicyclist, please visit the City's website at <http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientId=11352&stateId=36&stateName=Oklahoma>. This location allows user to search the municipal ordinances by subject.